

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “President’s HHS Budget For FY2014”
April 18, 2013

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing. I want to welcome Secretary Sebelius back to the committee.

This morning, we will review the president's proposed fiscal year 2014 budget for the Department of Health and Human Services, which calls for nearly \$1 trillion in spending – a budget larger than the estimated 2012 federal expenditures of the country of Brazil. With such massive spending levels, and a debt topping \$16.5 trillion, we owe it to American taxpayers to diligently review the administration's proposals.

Today's hearing will not just be an opportunity to review the president's budget proposal, but it will also serve as an opportunity to bring the questions and concerns of our constituents about the president's health care law directly to the secretary, with the hope of getting answers.

Even though the majority of Americans oppose Obamacare and do not want it implemented, they still need to know what they need to do to comply with the law. The administration has had three years to provide guidance, but many important questions remain unanswered. The lack of answers has caused confusion and concern across this country on issues that are central to Americans' lives, like whether small business owners can continue to provide health care to their employees.

Take the case of a business in my district. They are a family-owned business with a history of good stewardship in the community. They treat their employees like family and have been proudly protecting them against injury or illness for many years. But they are worried about how the health care law creates a perverse incentive for employers to stop offering health care coverage. In a recent meeting with them back in Michigan, they told me that their long history of providing health coverage might end if one of their competitors decides save money by forcing workers into the exchanges and paying a small penalty. If other companies like the one in my district do not follow suit, they will not be able to remain competitive and their entire business could go under.

Americans are now faced with many hard choices because of this law. With less than nine months until the new health care law is fully implemented, Americans are watching closely and becoming increasingly concerned about the law's impact on their health care, their jobs, and their well-being.

There is also cause for alarm when those with intimate knowledge of the law, its own authors, are predicting a “huge train wreck coming down” as Senate Finance Chairman Max Baucus said just yesterday.

My hope is that this hearing will be an informed discussion on the department's intentions for this budget and the implementation of the president's health care law. The American people deserve answers, and I hope they get them today.

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